**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

Sermon

*Romans Series - Chapter 10*

 ***God Made the First Move***

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October 13th In the Year of Our Lord 2019

(Unless otherwise noted, NAS text is quoted)

 In chapter nine and ten, Paul is transparent with his heart’s desire and prayer to his own people, the Jews. Paul desperately wants them to accept God’s Gospel Message as taught by the Old Testament prophets and restated by Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the risen Lord. God calls Saul of Tarsus to be his servant. God calls all people to be His servant. Paul responded.

 **Acts 9:15-16** 15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; 16 for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake.

 We know from Scripture that Paul was beaten and ‘left for dead’ on numerous occasions due to his testimony for the Lord. Paul made a life commitment to follow the Lord and overcome obstacles of every kind, be it cultural, political, language or theological.

 These opening words of Paul are not from a person who simply goes to church on Sunday and decided to write some letters about his personal faith to friends in another city. God sent Paul on a mission, and Paul lived his life in pursuit of God’s Gospel mission. We, too, are called by the Lord. We, too, have been sent on a mission. Every Believer, who has access to God’s Word, has the responsibility to know His Word and witness to others. Even for those who do not have access to God’s Word, they, too, are responsible to know God through the creation (Romans 1:18ff). The preparation may take years, but we are all on a life’s spiritual journey that God has planned for our lives (Ephesians 2:10). We, also, are to witness God’s word in our actions and statements. We all accomplish this in our own individual way. We are not all the same. We have been given various spiritual gifts.

**1 Corinthians 12:4-7 4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. 6 There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all *persons*. 7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.**

So, we will not all be like Paul, but we can be effective in where the Lord has called us. Paul is one of our Biblical inspirations of a person who used the spiritual gifts with which God equipped him.

**Romans 10:1** Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for *their* salvation.

**Compare to Romans 9:1** I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, 2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.

 2 For I (Paul) testify about them that they have a zeal for God,

but not in accordance with knowledge.

 3 For not knowing about God's righteousness

and seeking to establish their own,

they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.

 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness

to everyone who believes. (Jesus’ Cross satisfied the debt)

 5 For Moses writes (Exodus 20:11,13,21; Leviticus 18:5

that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law

 shall live by that righteousness.

 In Deuteronomy 30:11-15, Moses writes for God. Paul references the same passage here in Romans 10. The setting in Exodus is Moses recounting the time when the Hebrews were going to cross the Red Sea. Paul points to what the Hebrews did not have to do. God provided salvation to their plight. In their faith to follow God’s servant, Moses, they then would be delivered from bondage and persecution.

 Paul is clear that it is God, as Jesus Christ, who delivered the commands, the Gospel Message from heaven. God brings the salvation message to lost humanity from heaven. God made the first move towards fallen humanity in order that we would all have the opportunity to be saved. Let us observe some of God’s first moves.

1. God created us in His image.
2. God loved us first.
3. God established the Book of Life with everyone’s name listed with an “A” besides their entry.
4. God desires for everyone to be saved, not one person to be lost.
5. God came to Adam first and gave him a choice to live forever by not eating from the forbidden tree.
6. God sent His Holy Spirit, prophets and teachers to tap us on our spiritual shoulder making us aware that we have sinned and distanced ourselves from God.
7. God incarnated Himself as a man coming down from Heaven to save all of humanity. No person ascended to Heaven to acquire some asset to save people from an eternity separated from God. Jesus came from heaven with the mission and the commandments. Jesus went to the grave and rose to an everlasting life. Just as the Hebrews had no power to successfully cross the sea during the Exodus, they didn’t have any power to achieve the Incarnation, Resurrection or Ascension.

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 6 But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows:

"DO NOT SAY IN YOUR HEART,

'WHO WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN?' (that is, to bring Christ down),

 7 or 'WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS?'

(that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)."

 8 But what does it say?

"THE WORD IS NEAR YOU,

IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART "—

that is, the **word of faith** which we are preaching,

**Deuteronomy 30:11-15**

 11 "For this commandment which I command you today

is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach.

 12 "It is not in heaven, that you should say,

'Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us

and make us hear it,

that we may observe it?'

 13 "Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say,

'Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us

and make us hear it,

that we may observe it?'

 14 "But the word is very near you,

in your mouth and in your heart,

that you may observe it.

 15 "See, I have set before you today life and prosperity,

and death and adversity;

**Deuteronomy 6:4-14** 4 "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!

 5 "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

 6 "These words, which I am commanding you today,

 shall be on your heart.

 7 You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.

 8 "You shall bind them as a sign on your hand

and they shall be as frontals on your forehead.

 9 "You shall write them on the doorposts of your house

 and on your gates.

 10 "Then it shall come about when the LORD your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities which you did not build,

 11 and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you eat and are satisfied,

 12 then watch yourself, that you do not forget the LORD who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

13 "You shall fear *only* the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name.

 14 "You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you,

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 9 that if you **confess with your mouth** Jesus *as* Lord,

and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead,

you will be saved;

10 for with the heart a person believes,

resulting in righteousness,

and with the **mouth he confesses,**

resulting in salvation.

 11 For the Scripture says,

"WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." (Isaiah 28:6)

 God’s sovereign authority accomplishes this for us. God is there to accept our heart-felt surrender to His Holy Spirit conviction. This is the only way people can be saved. God has accomplished all the work and waits for our surrender. Those in Acts 2:36ff are an accurate witness to people’s lost condition. By Peter coming to them after the Cross and after the Apostle’s Pentecostal empowerment, the Jews were provided an opportunity to surrender to the Lord. God came to them in His grace and mercy through Peter with a Holy Spirit convicting message. These Jews could not get or obtain the power of salvation themselves. They called to Peter, “What must we do?” This is the point of total capitulation. “Now when they heard *this*, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37)

 Lost people don’t have any power within themselves to save themselves. Paul clearly witnessed in Romans 7 that the power of the law of sin and death defeated him. Until there is a surrender of the heart, God will not come in and “repent” a person. This means that a person doesn’t have any power to change their life direction. Surrender to God, and then He turns a person (repents a person) by giving them the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:2). This is what happened to those to whom Peter preached. Once they surrendered, then they had God’s spiritual power working in their hearts. They then could repent and witness their salvation in water-baptism and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. Once again, a person surrenders to the conviction of the Holy Spirit and then they can receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Once this salvation takes place, the Believer is predestined “to becomeconformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified” (Romans 8:29-30).

 Jesus witnessed His mission about the power of the Cross.

 "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw **all** men to Myself" (John 12:32).

 In God’s foreknowledge, He knows all who will choose to surrender to Him to be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29). And these, He foreknew, He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will (Ephesian 1:5). God calls all people to Him to be justified through the Cross just as Jesus said (John 12:32).

But again, the application of the Cross is reserved for those who actually surrender and receive God’s grace gift of salvation in their heart. These are the ones who God foreknows will chose to surrender to Him. These are the ones whom He predestines to be justified and glorified. Once a person surrenders and becomes saved then they are predestined (Romans 8:30).

Jesus’ statement (John 12:32) is a universal declaration that the Cross provided what theologians call “General Atonement.” This means that every person who was ever conceived is afforded access to the saving power of the Cross. The Cross paid the price for the sins of the whole world from the beginning. It is irrespective if a lost person claims their redemption. The Cross is intended for them. The Cross is there for the choosing. Hence, Paul states there isn’t any distinction between people in the application of the Cross.

 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek;

 for the same *Lord* is Lord of all,

 abounding in riches for all who call on Him;

 Supporting Jesus’s universal and general atonement statement, Paul repeats Joel 2:32 in another universal call for anyone, for everyone, to call upon God for salvation.

 13 for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." (See Joel 2:32)

Romans 10:14 and following are very challenging for the Hebrews. In somewhat of a sarcastic way, Paul presents a series of questions to which he already knows the answers. These passages have been used by some in the church to support a Postmillennial view of eschatology (End Times). The main idea is that if the Church does its job in evangelizing the whole world, then Jesus comes for the second time. No doubt that Jesus’ Second Coming will happen, and the Church is to evangelize the whole world, but this verse is not the verse to use to support those realities. We have Matthew 28:19 and Luke 24:27 for the Great Commission to cite a couple of verses. For the Second Coming, we have John 14:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Acts 1:10,11; Hebrews 9:28; Matthew 24:42-44; John 5:28,29; Titus 2:11-13; James 5:7. We are not dependent on Romans 10 to support the mission of the Church or the Second Coming. To do so is to take Romans 10 out of context.

 What we receive from Romans 10:14ff is a repeat of Romans 1:18ff. God has revealed Himself through the creation from the beginning of time and all people from the beginning are without excuse. So, to Paul’s point, God is holding the Jews accountable just like the Gentiles. Romans 10:15 is the indicting passage. Citing Psalm 19, Paul is clear that God has communicated and ‘reached out’ to the Hebrews. Paul is also clear that the Jews were disobedient and obstinate to God. "ALL THE DAY LONG I HAVE STRETCHED OUT MY HANDS TO A DISOBEDIENT AND OBSTINATE PEOPLE" (Romans 10:21 from Isaiah 65:2).

 In quoting Isaiah 65:2, Paul calls upon the authority of the prophet. In fact, Paul calls upon the authority of all the prophets quoting David, Isaiah, Nahum, Joel and Moses. Paul had a reputation and character that preceded him during his lifetime. However, he still called upon the Old Testament prophets to stand upon. Paul, in very vivid terms, displayed the reality of the Hebrew people’s relationship with God. He also identifies that the Jews and the Gentiles hold the same status with God. All are sinners in need of salvation. All have an opportunity to surrender to God.

14 How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed?

How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard?

And how will they hear without a preacher?

15 How will they preach unless they are sent?

Just as it is written,

"HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET (Isaiah 52:7, Nahum 1:15)

OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!"

16 However, they did not all heed the good news;

for **Isaiah** says,

"LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?" (Isaiah 53:1)

**17 So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.**

 18 But **I** (Paul)say,

surely they have never heard,

**have they?**

**Indeed they have;**

"THEIR VOICE HAS GONE OUT INTO ALL THE EARTH,

AND THEIR WORDS TO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD." **(Psalm 19:4)**

 **Psalm 19:1** For the choir director. A Psalm of David. The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.

 2 Day to day pours forth speech, And night to night reveals knowledge.

 3 There is no speech, nor are there words; Their voice is not heard.

 4 Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their utterances to the end of the world. In them He has placed a tent for the sun,

 5 Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber; It rejoices as a strong man to run his course.

 6 Its rising is from one end of the heavens, And its circuit to the other end of them; And there is nothing hidden from its heat.

 7 The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

 8 The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

 9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.

 10 They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.

 11 Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward.

 12 Who can discern *his* errors? Acquit me of hidden *faults*.

 13 Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous *sins*; Let them not rule over me; Then I will be blameless, And I shall be acquitted of great transgression.

 14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer.

 19 But **I** (Paul) say,

surely Israel did not know,

did they?

First **Moses** says, **(Deuteronomy 32:21)**

"I WILL MAKE YOU JEALOUS BY THAT WHICH IS NOT A NATION,

BY A NATION WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING WILL I ANGER YOU."

 20 And **Isaiah** is very bold and says, **(Isaiah 65:1)**

"I WAS FOUND BY THOSE WHO DID NOT SEEK ME,

I BECAME MANIFEST TO THOSE WHO DID NOT ASK FOR ME."

 21 But as for **Israel** He says, **(Isaiah 65:2)**

"ALL THE DAY LONG I HAVE STRETCHED OUT MY HANDS TO A DISOBEDIENT AND OBSTINATE PEOPLE."

 **Romans 11:1** I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

**God’s Open Salvation**

As Americans, we are all frustrated at the health insurance system. One of the challenges is the limited time to enroll. A person by law has to enroll by a certain time. I know the laws are constantly changing, and I am not sure of all the current laws. The point I am making is that the government dictates when a person must enroll and participate in their insurance program and that time frame is limited.

When Jesus told the world in John, "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself" (John 12:32), He declared that God’s season for enrollment into His salvation plan is open-ended. There isn’t any time frame.

We read in Matthew 7:13-15

13 "Enter through the narrow gate;

for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.

 14 "For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

 15 "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

 **Luke 13:24** "Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

(THEY ARE BLIND AND CANNOT HEAR)

I believe that the way is narrow, because fallen humanity makes it that way. God’s door is open 24/7.

God has spoken to people in many different ways, and many refuse to acknowledge that Holy Spirit voice calling to them. God’s Holy Spirit calls in the still of the night and in the roar of the crowd. God calls into prisons and into corporate board rooms. Fallen humanity makes the path narrow and the gate narrow.

**John 10:9** "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.